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2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42



273 178 [426] or rice along with them, so that there is no food at home; in spite of this when they come home and no food has been prepared for them, they scold their wives a good deal and even beat them. The poor wife, where is she to get anything with which to prepare food? If they have no paddy or rice, they will drink, making debts. Then in the month of Magh (middle of January to middle of February) the Sundi comes, harasses and threatens them, and carts their paddy bundles away. The wife and children of such a man pass their time in much suffering, as regards food and clothes. From the forest they bring vegetables and different kinds of tubers, cook and eat these. Formerly they were drinking four, or six, or if it became very much, eight leaf-cups; in this way their strength was not diminished; they were very strong and vigorous like youths. Nowadays, by constantly drinking and by marrying before they are fullgrown, they are becoming puny and stunted in growth; by behaving in such a way,— how should they retain their strength?

### c. Stories and folk-tales.

538 By fairy-stories, folk-tales, and conundrums the Santals feel much enjoyment. In the evening the old men teach them this. The sons and daughters-in-law are occupied in the evening cooking rice and curry, making leaf-cups and leaf-plates, and the old people, husband and wife, tell the children fairy-stories and folk-tales and ask them riddles, to make them happy. If anyone knows a number of fairy-stories and folk-tales, the young people of the village will also gather at his place. And at the threshing-floors, when it is cold and they lie in the huts there, the young men learn much of this. Some people know so many; they tell the others folk-tales the whole night until dawn, still they are not finished, and those who listen do not get tired either; at such times they have no thought at all of dancing; listening they are utterly charmed by joy[3].

Girls and boys mostly learn riddles, and all day long they ask each other such. The young men learn more fairy-stories and folk-tales; even if girls learn the same, they will only get enough courage to let this be known in the presence of people when they have reached the age of old women. The folk-tales are especially about jackals; the fairy-stories are about kings and landlords and about different kinds of people, and the riddles are about a thousand different matters. When they start a riddle, they say: "A riddle, kite, kite", thereupon they give out the riddle[4].

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113 [114] [3] The Santals have a very large number of folk-tales and stories. The present writer has collected several hundreds. Ten such tales have been published in the Publications of the Indian Institute of the Royal Frederik University, Kristiania 1924, and 96 other tales by Institutet for Sammenligende Kulturforskning (Santal Folk Tales, vol. I to III, Oslo 1925, 1927, and 1929). A few have also been published in a similar way by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta. The manuscript of several hundreds, all written down for me by Santal men and women, is now in the University Library, Oslo. [4] See P. O. Bodding, Santal Riddles. Witchcraft among the Santals. Oslo Etnografiske Museums Skrifter, vol. 3, fasc. 3. Oslo 1940.

2: Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42



551 593 607 We have further belief in various matters. People say: If husband and wife name each other's name, the children become deaf; therefore they do not name each other's name. And if a man and the wife of his younger brother, or a woman and the husband of her younger sister, or the wife of her younger brother name each other's name, they will not, it is told, burn when they are cremated after death; therefore they do not among us name each other's name. Husband and wife call on each other saying, father or mother of so and so child, and when they have not as yet got any children, they call on each other using some general expression[10].

[10] For a number of details in connexion with the customs here mentioned the reader is referred to the writer's paper 'On Taboo and Customs connected therewith among the Santals' in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. LXVII, Part III, 1898.

[113]

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174 121 In course of the following pages we intend to give the readers an idea of these dark races of the pre-historic times in the hope that it will prove interesting.

174 *Theories of Pre-Dravidian Immigration*

Now, various conflicting theories confront us as to the earliest history of the Pre-Dravidian Muṇḍà family. The first hypothesis deserving mention asserts that they emigrated from the now submerged hypothetical continent of Lemuria which is supposed to have connected India with Madagascar and Africa. This receives weight from the fact that European philologists have discovered distinct language affinities all over a wide belt of territory including India, Further India, Cochin China, Malay and Nicober Islands, the Philippine Islands, Malacca and Australia. The vocabulary and language-forms associate the languages spoken there with Mundari, Santali, Bhumij, Ho, Birhor, Koda, Turi, Asuri, Korwa, Kurku, Kharia, Juang, Savara, and Gadaba.[1] All these unmistakably point to a racial contact in the past, and lead Dr. Grierson to suppose that all these countries were inhabited by an old race since extinct, whose language now sur-

[113]

1. Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, *The Muṇḍàs and their Country*, pp. 18-19.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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174 the line of the sacred river, Damodar. (*Ref. Dt. Gazetteer*, Santal Parganas, 1910, p. 90).

The third hypothesis[1] goes to suggest that the Muṇḍà tribes originated from an admixture between the colonists from Eastern Tibet or Western China across the Himalayas with the Australoids to the south of the Himalayas.

The fourth theory, advocated by Sir Herbert Risley, proclaims the Muṇḍà-tribes to be the earliest inhabitants of whom we have any knowledge, lending weight to the assertion of the Muṇḍàs and their congeners that they are genuine autocthones of the Indian soil.

Last but not the least, there is the fifth theory propounded by Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy, as president of the Anthropological section of the *Prabasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan*, Gauhati session (1938). He opined that the Pre-Dravidians or Proto-Australoids, probably a lower branch of the Caucasian races inhabited the south-western foot of the Himalayas, which however was not their birth place. Thereafter, they passed by the Jumna and the Ganges, moved on towards the Central Provinces, Bengal and Assam, and spread even to Burma and Cambodia.

[113]

1 See "On some traces of Kol-Mon-Anam, the Eastern Naga Hills" by S. E. Peal, Royal Asiatic Society's Journal, Bengal, Vol. LXV, page 20.

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own ; and although there are local variations in different areas where the Santals are found at present, they agree essentially in substance.

539

### *Santal Genesis and Exodus*[1]

The "Hòṛkoṛèn Mare Hapramkó Reak' Katha[2]" which contains the Institutes and traditions of the Santals, lays it down that man was created in the east, the land of the Rising Sun. According to them, in the beginning there was only water and underneath the waters soil. Then Ṭhàkur Jiu (*the spirit of God*) created the aquatic animals as the crab, alligator, crocodile, "raghòp'-boar" (*whale*), tortoise, earth-worm, lobster and others.

Then Ṭhàkur Jiu said, "What shall I create now ?, I shall create man." So he made men in dual form out of earth. And as he was going to breathe life-breath into them, lo! from the skies "siñ sadòm" (*horse from the sun*) came down and destroyed the two images.

Ṭhàkur Jiu was very sorry. He said that he would no more make men but create birds.

[113]

1. This was published in the form of an article in the Mayurbhanj Chronicle, January, 1938, being a contribution by the author.

2. With acknowledgements to Mr. R. Kisku Rapaz, Assistant Headmaster, Dumka Zila School and the Benagaria Mission Press, Santal Parganas, which publishes the book.

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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539 "O, O, on the waters ; O, O, these beings;
O, O, they are born.
Oh! for these beings! O, where shall we keep them? O, where?" (Then someone answered:—)
"O, go and tell Bara Ṭhàkur. O, they are born, these beings!
Where will you keep them? Yea, where will you keep them?"

On the birds flew to Ṭhàkur Jiu. "How shall we maintain these creatures?" they pleaded.

Ṭhàkur gave them cotton. "Whatever you eat, squeeze the juice and feed them with the cotton," he replied.

Thus the children grew up, but as they became older and older, the worries of the parents increased. Where were they going to house them, was their only thought. Again they approached Ṭhàkur Jiu and informed him of their fresh problems.

"Fly away and find a place for them," advised he.

So on they flew, and on and on, till they reached a place called Hihiṛi Pipiṛi.[1] They came

1. Hihiṛi Pipiṛi = "Their earliest abode was Hihiṛi or Ahiṛi Piṛi, a name which Skrefsrud derived from *bir* origin, and which others identify with pargana Ahuri in Hazaribagh." Risley, *People of India*, App. VII. Skrefsrud considers Hihiṛi Pipiṛi to be a reduplication of Hiṛi Piṛi, which again is a jingle of Hiṛi, like "hako-pako."

[174]
[113]

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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167 they are advancing, grazing and eating. But still they have not yet been extinguished from the face of the earth. They do not know where they will go next. Some have crossed the Ganges. It is not known why Thàkur (*the Creator*) is punishing them in this way.

128 114 We consider that it will be instructive at this stage to refer to the traditions as collected and commented upon by the previous antiquarians so that our story of Santal genesis and migration may be examined in the light of these.

114 167 Mr. E. G. Man, one of the earliest writers on the Santals,[1] quoting the opinion of Mr. Sutherland, Joint Magistrate of Monghyr, (1817) refers to the "Sonthars who emigrate (in the Santal Parganas) from the Beerbhoom and Ramghar district, and even from the Nagpur territory." An old [173] Santal told him that they came from "Chai Jumpa" in the Nagpur district, and their migrations were due to the oppressions of a "Mahadeo Singh". [101] They first called themselves "Shaitals" which was gradually corrupted into "Sonthars." Now they are known as Santals. Some of them say that they were originally "Kerwars."

[113] 1. Ref. *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*, E. G. Man, page 11.

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Man has some ingenious reflections on the antiquities of the tribe when he hazards the opinion that Greek elements were infused into the Santals while at Rajmahal after Alexander's conquests in India.[1] His book proves a very interesting reading when we find him quoting the opinion of a gentleman who suggested a resemblance between Santal and Jewish myths and rituals. A second person told Man that the Santals reminded him of the Romans, while a third, that he thought that the tribe had borrowed some ideas from the Egyptians. "All were," says Man, "prepared to agree as to their similarity with the ancients, but each made a different comparison." Faced with this jigsaw puzzle and taking into account the Biblical similarities in the story of Ṭhākur Jiu's punishment of the tribe by sending fire and rain while at Khòj kaman, he takes the myth to be a "garbled account of the flood," and concludes that either the traditions of all these ancients were derived from the same source or the Santals were connected with the above-named tribes at some period of their existence.

The next account deserving mention is given by Rev. L. O. Skrefsrud.[2] The version is remarkably

1. Ref. *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*, E. G. Man pp. 59-63.

2. Ref. *Grammar of the Santali language*, Rev. L. O. Skrefsrud, Published from Benares 1873.

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[113]

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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are known to have followed in their retreat corresponds on the whole with that attributed to them in their tribal legends."

Rev. P. O. Bodding[1] however is inclined to give due weight to the traditional origin of the Santals. Summing up the whole position he opines that the Cae and Campa of Santal myths are to be found in Hazaribagh and on the Chotanagpur plateau, where they lived about 600 years ago, and gives it as his conclusion that a study of Santal traditions and their language makes it likely that they reached this place from the west (south-west); and it is not improbable that about two thousand years ago they were on both sides of the Ganges west of Benares.

We would conclude this chapter with a reference to the myths of the other Muṇḍà tribes to see if any side-light may be obtained on the early history of the Santals. Now, speaking generally, there is a good deal of resemblance between the traditions of the Muṇḍàs, the Santals and the Khaṛias, which makes the conclusion irresistible that they belong to the same stock. We have seen that the Santals say that upto the period the people were at Campa,[2] the

1. *Bengal District Gazetteers*, Santal Parganas, Vol. XXII, pp. 92-95.

2. Campa = According to S. C. Roy, (p. 100, footnote) Campa was also the old name of Bhagalpur and its political boundary "may be stated as extending from

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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173 167 648 Now the Santals and Mundàs parted company. The Santals left Nagpur (Chotanagpur), crossed the Damodar and settled down in Sikharbhum (the modern district of Hazaribagh) and later on, followed the course of the Damodar and passed on to Manbhum[1] and to the Santal Parganas, while the Mundàs preferred to remain in the forest-covered regions of what is now the Ranchi district.[2]

175 167 *Historical Basis of Santal Migration in the Santal Parganas*[3]

The history of Santal migrations does not however remain conjectural in the 18th Century, as we have authentic records to go upon. These will show that whatever their original habitat might have been, they were settled in the Chotanagpur plateau and in the adjoining districts of Midnapore and Singhbhum, and that they began to move to the north towards the close of the 18th Century.

[101] In 1795, we find them described as "Soontars" living in Ramgur (Ramgarh), a "rude and unlettered

1. The Santals of Mayurbhanj when questioned by us as to whether they were autocthonus in the place replied that they came from Sili Sikhar, some from Manbhum, while others from Dhalbhum. They asserted that Mayurbhanj was not their original seat.

2. Ref. *The Mundàs and their country*, S. C. Roy, page 111.

[113] 3. With acknowledgements to the *Dt. Gazetteer*, Santal Parganas, Vol.XXII, pp. 95-99.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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144 in size, position and colour, resemble certain peculiar
143 blue spots found on Mongol children, which are said to be a distinct race-mark not found outside the Mongol people."[1]

### *Their Language*

197 The Santals speak a language of their own. Linguists say that Santali belongs to the Mundà family of languages, which in its turn belongs to the Austro-Asiatic sub-family, termed so by Peter Schmidt. According to Dr. Campbell, this language has reached a much higher stage of development than any other dialect of the linguistic stock to which it belongs and is spoken with little variation in idiom or pronunciation over the greater part of the Santali-speaking areas. Northern Santali or that spoken in Bhagalpur, Monghyr, the Santal Parganas, Birbhum, Bankura, Hazaribagh and Manbhum, is the language of an overwhelming majority of the tribe, and is more polished than Southern Santali, or that spoken in the remaining districts, as a dialect, or a group of dialects of it.[2]

[192] Like all other languages, Santali has drawn upon other languages, but the influence of Bengali seems

[113] 1 *Mongolian race-marks among Santals.* J.A.S.B., 1904, Part II, p. 26.

[113] 2 Ref. Introduction to Dr. Campbell's Santali Dictionary (Edn. 1933).

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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to be the most prominent. Any one glancing through a Santali dictionary will be struck with the vocabulary bodily assimilated by the Santals from the current dialects of Bengal, and any one listening even to their folk-songs will notice that a large number of them are really in Bengali. We marked it even in the heart of Santalia, the Santal Parganas, when we heard a Santal woman humming, "Panch takar ghati bati chore laia gela" (*My pots and bowls worth rupees five have been stolen by thieves.*)[1]

Santali itself is a peculiarly expressive language so far as natural objects and things concerning the common life of agriculturists. But when it comes to the expression of things spiritual or the common ideas of modern civilization, it has got to fall back on the speech of the neighbours.

It is not, however, a written language and their traditional legends are orally handed down. The question of a Santal script engaged the attention of the early European Missionaries and they used the Roman script. It is due to their efforts that a large number of books have been written in the Roman script and the education imparted to Santals in the

1 The missionary in charge of the Dharampur district (S. P.) tells a story that while he was there with his wife, a Santal tried to explain that it was useless for them to teach Santali, as they knew the language well enough and pressed for Bengali or Hindi. (*Annual Report of the Santal Mission of Northern Churches* 1934).

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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The Hindu "Kamar" does work for them, the "Kumhars" make their pots and plates, the "Tantis" weave their clothes and some other depressed class Hindus mostly live within their localities. The influence of the Hindus living nearby saturates the thoughts and ideas of the Santals, and when we remember that ethnologically many of these Hindus were aboriginals in origin, we can find out the reasons why many Santals are really anxious to describe themselves as Hindus like their neighbours. In their rural settlements, one can find the Santals joining the worship of the Hindu gods and goddesses like Durga, Kali and Mahadev. Like the rest of the Hindus, they salute these deities and the entire tribe dance and amuse themselves during these ceremonies.

### *Population*

A recent worker on the Tribal Demography in India[1] regrets that the data on the tribals are the most inaccurate of all gathered together in Census reports. The net effect, he says, is to understate the number of tribals and correspondingly to overstate the number of other groups.

I. Singh, in his *Development and Adibasis*, in Asian Labour, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Jan. 1950) says, "Adibasis...number not less than 30 millions accord-

1 *Tribal Demography in India* by C. B. Mamoria, p. 24.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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162 857,030. They are by far the largest number of aboriginal tribes and exceed in number all the Hindu castes except the Brahmins and the Gowalas.[1] They populate the Santal Parganas very thickly, where more than one person out of every three is a Santal. Over the province as a whole there has been an addition of 234,662 (or about 16 per cent) to the total number enumerated at the last Census.[2]

The numerical strength of the Santals in Bihar and Orissa, according to the Census Report 1931, will be clear from the following comparative figures with the other tribes in the same province:—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ho | ... | 523,158 |
| Kharia | ... | 146,037 |
| Khond | ... | 315,709 |
| Mundà | ... | 549,764 |
| Oraon | ... | 637,111 |
| Santal | ... | 1,712,133 |

162 771 So far as the religion of the Santals is concerned, the Census returns in Bihar and Orissa (1931) showed 586,499 persons (293,807 males and 292,692 females) as Hindu Santals. The Christian Santals were returned at a total number of 13,279 (males 6,754 and females 6,525); whereas, those

[113]

1 This is compiled from the *Census Reports of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, 1931.

2 Ref. *Census Report*, Bihar and Orissa, 1931, p. 294.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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162 increase was abnormally low. It was a little over
[164] 3 per cent. The influenza epidemic was responsible for this result. In the present Census, the rate of growth has been nearly by 17 per cent."[1] The total variation in the Santal population of Mayurbhanj from 1891 to 1931 is + 166,705.

162 As regards literacy amongst the Mayurbhanj
212 Santals, it may be noted that while in 1911, there were 720 literate males and 38 literate females, the number of literate males and females in 1921 stood at 970 and 12 respectively. In 1931, however, the numbers rose to 2,044 males and 32 females.

162 Summing up, it may be said that the Santal
212 literates constitute 0·78 per cent out of their total
171 strength in Mayurbhanj, whereas, the Gonds record 3·37 per cent. This may also be usefully compared with the literacy figures of one of the Hindu castes viz. Kayasthas in Mayurbhanj which reach 36·39 per cent.

162 Out of the other Orissa states, it is gathered that Nilgiri contains 3,235 and Keonjhar 16,172 Santals according to the Census of 1931; and in both these states, the net variation from the year 1891 to 1931 was + 2,901 and + 14,446 respectively.[2]

[113] 1. Ref. *Mayurbhanj Census Report*, 1931, Vol. I, p. 151.

2 These figures were kindly supplied by Mr. P. K. Dass, Asst. Secretary, Mayurbhanj State.

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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## CHAPTER V

## KINSHIP ORGANISATION

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We have seen in the preceding pages that the Santals are divided into exogamous groups for matrimonial purposes. For a better comprehension of the inner organisation of the tribe, it is necessary for us to study in detail, the marriage restrictions amongst the clans, the kinship nomenclature, and the rights and duties of different classes of relatives.

### *Jàtià Peŗa and Bòndhu Peŗa*

The inner working of the exogamous groups amongst the Santals can be further elucidated by the fact that they are always divided into two groups for the purposes of marriage. These groups are called *Jàtià Peŗa and Bòndhu Peŗa*.[1] The dormitory system, so much a characteristic of some of the Muṇḍà tribes, is not in existence so far as the Santals are concerned. Let us take the case of the Murmu clan. The members of their clan are called *Jàtià Peŗa* (friends of the same blood) and the rest of the Santals are *Bòndhu Peŗa* (the clan with whom they may enter into matrimonial relations).

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1. Cf. Kutumb and Bandhu villages of the Pauri Bhuiyas. "The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa." P. 134. Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy.

[113]

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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dangers visiting the tribe. In the background of their minds, they are not imbued by any moral feelings or any sense of tribal aristocracy. Some think that in case of such transgression, the gods in their ire will send drought and famine and pestilence in the place thus visited by sin as it is an insult to them. But when one analyses the behaviour of the Santal masses, when they receive news of prohibited sexual congress and the collective indignation they give vent to as a reaction, one is led to believe that the Santal's almost "instinctive fear of such defilement has behind it also the sub-conscious and, to all appearances, instinctive fear of a mysterious dangerous power of the nature of *mana* infecting the erring woman and her family and calculated to prove contaminating and destructive as death."[1]

### *Santal Customary Law*

We have seen in the foregoing pages that the village-council is the repository of Santal tribal law concerning succession and inheritance. It is therefore necessary for us to give the reader some idea of the law on the subject.

Generally speaking, all the sons of a Santal have equal shares of inheritance in the properties left by their deceased father. The daughter has no right

1. The Kharias. Page 177. Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy.

181 619 783 784 181 783 778 671 623 428 428 [113]

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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SANTAL PARGANAS



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### *Magh Sim*[1] *(January-February)*

The month of *Magh* (Jan.-Feb.) is the end of the Santal year and it has got appropriate ceremonials with the cutting of jungle thatching grass. Servants are paid their wages and fresh contracts entered into. All village officials resign, *rayats* notify throwing up of lands and are reappointed amidst drinks of rice-beer[2]

[465]
[675]

### *Baha, the Santal 'Sal'-Blossom Festival.*[3]

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Towards the latter part of February, the Santals celebrate *Baha*, their *sal*-blossom season, an occasion for wholesale tribal rejoicing with sprinkling of water, its special songs and dances.

According to *Hòṛkorèn Mare Hapṛamko Reak' Katha*, the Traditions and Institutions of the Santals, the aim of the festival is to celebrate the advent of Spring, which sees the efflorescence of their favourite *sal*, (Shorea Robusta), *pòlas* (Butea Frondosa), *mohua* (Bassia latifolia), *icak'* (Woodfordia Floribunda, Salib.) flowers. So long *Baha* is not over, no Santal will suck the honey of these flowers or eat them, nor will their women wear them in their hair.

1 Mayurbhanj Santals name it *Magh-Sim*, meaning a worship in the month of Magh, as distinct from *Mage-Sim* of the Muṇḍàs.

2 Ref. Risley, *People of India*, App. Viii. clxvi.

3 Quoted from the author's article in the *Modern Review*, May 1936.

[113]

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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On the *dan* swings along,
(Sir) Bhòkta merrily tossed.

The joy of Santalia during such festivals knows no bounds. Large batches of men and women go from place to place. The men play on pipes. The women decorate their hair with beautiful flowers and entwine their arms round one another's shoulders. The kettle-drums, the cymbals and the wine, produce an atmosphere in which these simple people forget their mundane existence in the pursuit of their primitive practices and observances. The *joie de vivre* is reflected in the following song in which a woman requests her sister to accompany her to witness the *Pata* festival for three days to their heart's content.[1]

Cetan disòmrè pè maha jagròn pata hoyok' ;
Dara ge didi ge sòngè jaibò,
Pè maha jagròn sòbay jaybò.

*Translation* : —

In the uplands for three days they keep awake
for the Pata ;
O sister, do wait for me, I shall go with you ;
For three nights they keep awake ; we all
shall go.

1 Quoted and adapted from the author's article "Santal Folk-Poetry" published in the *New Review*, September, 1936.

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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defeated. They praised Gumda wholeheartedly. 539*
Now, they searched out the teeth and went to the Raja and presented him with the find.

The Raja was so pleased that he gave his daughter in marriage to Gumda and further gave him half his kingdom.

## A GENERAL VIEW OF SANTAL FOLK-TALES* 538

### *Animal Stories*

Forest-dwellers as the Santals were, they have folk-tales attributing human traits to the animals much in the strain of Aesop. Although one should not probe too much for hidden allegories, the lessons of these stories are sometimes quite clear, and it is more interesting to see how animal life has been interpreted by the erstwhile denizens of the primaeval jungles.

From the eight stories dealing with jackals, we find them to be the most cunning of animals and the most treacherous. In "The Jackal and the Crow" the jackal eats up his bosom-friend, the crow. "The Jackal and the Chickens" teaches us how a jackal and a hen regarded each other as brothers and sisters and

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* This is a critical review of some of the stories in the Folk-tales of the Santal Parganas, collected by Rev. P. O. Bodding and translated by C. H. Bompas, I.C.S. [113]

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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work amongst them, as it will serve as a brake against hasty measures.

We make no apology for quoting in conclusion an extract from the opinion of H. C. Chakladar (*Man in India*, Vol. XXI, no. 4. p. 216) on the effect of civilisation on aboriginals: [113]

"There are forces, however, that withstand an unlimited diffusion of culture elements. The mental activity or psychological character of the people to whom a new culture trait is presented, plays a great role in its dissemination. They must be psychologically adapted to receive it; otherwise it is likely to be rejected. And if culture is forcibly introduced among a people not so adapted, it leads to disastrous consequences. The intrusion of Euro-American culture everywhere, in America, Australia, Africa, is being followed by the quick extinction of the native population while the slow and silent absorption of the Hindu culture of Bengal by tribes at a comparatively low stage of cultural development, like the Santal, Mundah, Kol, Ho, Kharia, and other cognate tribes on its South-western, and the Garo, Kachari, Tipara, Kuki, Chakma, and others on the Eastern frontiers, has not only kept them alive, but has been producing lasting benefits to both the communities concerned. This process of natural diffusion by unobtrusive filtration, without any organised effort of the parties concerned, that

4: Biswas D, E-3,4 (1931-1945) 1956
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believed that the Santals came to the present abode from North East India. 114 174

Dr. A. Campbell[1] is of the opinion that the Santals, or rather the people of whom they are a portion, occupied the country on both sides of the Ganges, but more especially that in the north. Starting from the north-east, they gradually worked their way up the valley of the Ganges till we find them in the neighbourhood of Benares, with their headquarters near Mirzapur. Here the main body, which had kept to the northern bank of the river, crossed, and, heading southwards, came to the Vindhya hills. This obstruction deflected them to the left, and they at length found themselves on the tableland of Chota Nagpur, and he further writes "Efforts have been made to identify the countries, rivers, forts, etc. mentioned in the traditions of the Santals with those of similar names in Chota Nagpur. Localities have in many instances been found bearing traditional names, and the inference has been drawn that it was here that the traditions of the Santals took their rise, and that their institutions were formed. But only a slight knowledge of these traditions is necessary to show that they belong to a much more remote period than the location of the Santals in Chota Nagpur, and to countries separated from it by many hundreds of miles."

Objecting to the above theory Sir Herbert Risley[2] writes the following "A people whose only means of recording facts consists of tying knots in strings, and who have no bards to hand down a national epic by [211] [538]

1. The Traditional Migration of the Santal Tribe, Indian Antiquity pp. 103-6. [113]
2. Tribes and Castes of Bengal Vol. II pp. 225-6.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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After that the boy has to pay sufficient money as fines to provide a feast for the whole village[1].

**Tunki Dipil Bapla**: This type of marriage is performed by poor men. As they have not sufficient money to bear the expenses of the regular marriage (Raibar Bapla) they resort to this type, in which the bride is brought to the house of the bridegroom with a small basket on her head, a few friends and relatives accompany her to her house. The bridegroom in the presence of these persons applies vermilion mark on her head and a feast is then arranged and the couple then live as husband and wife.

**Itut Bapla**: This is adopted by forward young men who are not quite sure whether the girl they fancy will accept them, and take this means of compelling her to marry. The man taking some vermilion on his fingers watches his opportunity at the fair or on any similar occasion, marks the girl he is in love with on the forehead and claims her as his wife. Doing this he runs away at full speed to escape from the thrashing he may expect at the hands of her relations if he is caught on the spot. In any case the girl's relatives will go to his village and will obtain from the headmen the permission to kill and eat three of the goats of the offender or of his father and a double bride-price must be paid for the girl. The marriage is however legal and if the girl still declines to live with the man, she must be divorced in full form and cannot again be married as a spinster.

[1]Uma Chowdhury—Marriage Customs of the Santals—Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology Vol. I No. 1 January, 1952 pp. 104-105.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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III

(a) Raranic or Herb-Doctor.

In his individual ailments the Santal recognises the disease to be due to either of the three causes as mentioned by Dr. Clements,[1] such as :

1. Natural causes,
2. Human agencies,
3. Supernatural agencies,

Naturally different functionaries are called upon to remedy the different items.

The man called upon to treat the diseases due to natural cause is the Raranic who comes nearest to our modern practising physician. He is a master of many herbs and simples. Like the modern physician he has faith in his drugs and herbs and looks askance on the practices of the spirit doctor or Ojha and his hocus-pocus. He learns his trade as an apprentice to an old practising Raranic who jealously guards the secrets of his herbs and prescriptions. They say that their knowledge is derived mostly by observation of animals attacked with disease and the way these cure themselves. He follows the diseased animal in the jungle and marks the herbs or roots From the encyclopaedic list of prescriptions collected by Rev. P.O. Bodding and Mrs. Bodding, M.B., one would infer that the Santal medical treatment has not been entirely conservative. There are indeed several items which could be taken as survival of primitive prescriptions such as the use of animal refuse or insect preparation, reminding us of the cauldron of Macbeth's witches.

[1] Forrest E. Clement's Primitive Concepts of Disease. University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, p. 186, Volume 32, No. 2, pp. 185, 252, year 1932.

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143 From the above table it appears that in the distribution of genes p, q and r the Santals fall closest to the proto-Australoids of India like the Hill Maler, Maria Gond, Malpaharia, Munda, on the one hand, to the southern Mongoloids like the Bhotia, Tibetan and Lepcha, and to the "partial" or mixed Mongoloids like the Tharus Rajis, Kumaoni Rajput etc. on the other. Because of the paucity of the data in most of the series represented in the table, it will be appropriate to say that the gene frequencies should be used cautiously. A very striking fact is the high incidence of group B among the castes of Northern India (particularly the 'exterior castes') which in combination with the strong doses of both the two agglutinogens is a characteristic feature of the Mundari and Monkhmer people[113].

143 144 The foregoing account is also suported[A] by the dermatoglyphic and somatometric analysis and as such it is highly appropriate to suggest that the Santals who are mainly proto-Australoids also show certain Mongoloid affinities on ethnic scales which in my opinion should be thoroughly investigated in Central India.

143 144 114 It is interesting in this connection to note Bodding's remarks regarding the Mongoloid affinity of the Santals. He states, 'The theory of Mongolian descent is not tenable, but there cannot be any doubt that Mongoloid blood has been introduced, either by the Santals taking Mongolian wives, or the Santal women having illegitimate children by Mongolian men". He further remarks,

[113] Sarkar S.S. Macfarlane (E.W.E.), Blood Groups in India, American Journal of Physical Anthropology Vol. 29, (1942).

[A] [Erratum: this should read "supported." Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. ix -- Analyst]

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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"other types may be found, but too few to be taken into account. All this proves mixture of blood at some time or other. What I would specially draw attention to in this connection, is the Mongoloid type, and types resembling what is found in Assam, Burma and further on"[1].

[1]Bengal District Gazetteers—Santal Parganas—by L.S.S.O. Malley (1910), pp. 94 and 101.

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## PREFACE

THIS study represents an attempt to provide the kind of book that I wish could have been placed in my hands when I first began to work among the Santals. It is based very largely on material gathered during my residence in the village of Sarenga, District Bankura, between October 1932 and April 1943. Much of what is said is true of the Santals wherever they are found. The uniformity of Santal culture over a wide area raises questions of great interest to students, but no attempt has been made to deal with them here. Nor have I attempted to deal with the wider questions involved in the problem of the Christian approach to peoples living in small-scale societies, though I hope that I may have been able to supply some data relevant to the discussion. We missionaries are at times impatient of the strictures of anthropologists, but we would do well to heed the warning of such a missionary as Dr. Kraemer when he says: "Missions make the claim, on account of their religious aim, that Christianity contains the forces of moral and spiritual regeneration so sorely needed in this time of disintegration. It is encouraging to read twice, for instance, in Monica Hunter's *Reaction to Conquest* that Christianity proves able to supply a new invigorating moral basis of life. Yet missions ought always to be mindful that this does not result *mechanically* from the acceptance of Christianity, but that to achieve it there is need for a constant application to the task of religious, moral, cultural and social education—and this must be inspired by the desire *to serve the true interests of the people.*"[1]

I count it among the more fortunate circumstances of my life that my first five years were spent at Pakur in the Santal Parganas; the investigations then begun perhaps helped to shape my outlook! During the years at Sarenga I came to owe a great debt to many individual Santals. Three men in particular helped by placing their knowledge at my disposal, and most of the statements in this book have been checked more than once in the course of many conversations with them. The late Ernest Soren was for many years headmaster of the Boys' School at Sarenga; he became a Christian in early manhood and was held in high regard by all who knew him, yet he never

[1] H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a non-Christian World*, London, 1938, p. 436. The italics are the author's.

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CHAPTER I

# THE MAKING OF A PEOPLE

The Santals are one of the largest of the tribal peoples of India; at the census of 1931 they numbered over two and a half million. Their villages are widely distributed over the area which lies between eighty-six and eighty-eight meridians east longitude and between twenty-two and twenty-six degrees north latitude. They are also found farther to the north-east, where some have settled in North Bengal and Western Assam. They are the most easterly of the great belt of primitive folk which stretches across Central India.

Where the Chota Nagpur plateau begins to give way to the Ganges plain the country is broken up into a series of ridges. Through the narrow valleys thus formed flow many streams which maintain a brief and furious life during the rains. There are few big rivers, and even these dry to nothingness in the hot season. In some parts there are ranges of low hills; in others conical-shaped hills rise abruptly from the undulating plain. The countryside is still for the most part well wooded, and the *sal* forests (*Shorea robusta*, Gartn.) contribute to the wellbeing of those who dwell in them. It is, however, a hard country in which to live, where the soil is rocky and the water supplies are scant.

Dr. B. S. Guha[1] has distinguished six main types among the races who inhabit India. The Santals belong to his second "main race", the Proto-Australoid, which he considers arrived in India soon after the Negritos. The name is given because of the similarity of racial type with Australian tribes. "We have no precise information as to when this race first came into India. It is found among the prehistoric skulls in the Tinnevelly district, and from references in early Sanskrit literature to 'Nishads', where they are described as noseless (*anash*) with dark skin colour and peculiar speech and habits, there can be no doubt that the Proto-Australoid tribes were meant."[2] The Santals are short in stature, and among them the broad flat nose with a sunken nose ridge is fairly common. They frequently have wavy hair; sometimes it is curly, though it is never frizzy. They share all these characteristics with other primitive tribes in the same group. Dr. Guha has cautiously attempted to state

[1] B. S. Guha, *Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs*, "Racial Elements in the Population", 1944.
[2] B. S. Guha, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

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Dr. Guha has cautiously attempted to state those features which present-day Indian culture owes to the Proto-Australoid: "To the Proto-Australoid races may perhaps be attributed a large share of totemistic rites, exorcism, food taboos, and magical belief still obtaining in Indian life. The ban on commensality and intermarriage which forms the basis of the caste system must also owe its origin to them."[1] It is impossible to dogmatize on these subjects when one remembers how widespread each of the above factors is among primitive cultures in various parts of the world. The tribal structure of the Santals is totemistic and the clans are patrilinear, as among the other tribes of Central India. Many of the taboos and customs which have grown up round life's crises, many features in the tribal ritual, their attitude towards disease and towards the supranatural world, are fundamentally similar not only throughout these tribes but throughout the lower range of the Hindu social structure. The perusal of such a book as William Crooke's *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*[2] gives convincing evidence of the large stock of ideas that are held in common.

By the test of language the Santals reveal a high degree of social cohesion. Dr. J. H. Hutton's judgment cannot be gainsaid: "The extent of the survival of tribal languages is a better index than that of the survival of tribal religion to the social cohesion of the tribe, since the test of language is easier and more definite than that of religion, where the borderland of Hinduism is often vague and obscure."[3] The Santals have been more tenacious of their language than many of the other peoples to whom they are racially allied. They are the largest tribe in India to retain an aboriginal language to the present day. This belongs to what is known as the Austric or Austro-Asiatic family. It is closely related to Mundari as well as to Ho, Korku, Savara and Gadaba, languages spoken by smaller tribes. The relationship of the Santals with these tribes is racial and cultural as well as linguistic, and as they live in neighbouring territories it is very likely that they have a common origin. They have nevertheless been separate long enough to develop their individual languages and to possess distinct though allied cultures. Other representatives of the Austro-Asiatic languages are found farther afield, the Mon-Khmer branch being found in Indo-China, while Khasi, spoken in Assam, is another. The fact that Khasis are Mongoloid and that their society is matri-

[1] B. S. Guha, *op. cit.*, p. 28. [2] Oxford University Press, 1926.
[3] *Census Report of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Ch. X, p. 348.

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linear is an example of the danger in seeking to base racial history on linguistic affinities; but as recently as 1943 Professor S. K. Chatterji[1] speaks of the Austric race, in which he follows scholars like Schmidt and Hévésy.

The Santals first began to attract the attention of Europeans during the first half of the nineteenth century. The first book on the Santals, published in 1867, was entitled *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*. The writer, E. G. Man,[2] had by then been serving a period as an Assistant Commissioner in the newly formed district of the Santal Parganas. It is natural that the Santals attracted most attention in that district, where they were not only found in the greatest numbers, but where also they had risen in rebellion in 1855. Long before the rebellion the government had indeed become aware of their existence and of the special problems which they presented to the administration. An earlier report,[3] the result of an investigation into the land tenures of the "hill people", or Paharias, of the Raj Mahal hills, which had been written in 1819, could not fail to make some reference to the Santals, who at that period were engaged in a mass migration into the area and were driving the Paharias into the farther fastnesses of the hills. At an even earlier date Francis Buchanan's account[4] of the district of Bhagalpur in 1810–11 gives a short account of some "five hundred families" of Santals whom he found in the Dumka subdivision in 1809.

Another early account was published in W. W. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*.[5] The writer claimed little first-hand knowledge and based his description on information supplied by the American Baptist missionaries who began work among the Santals in the western portions of the Midnapore district and in Orissa. The first reference to the Santals in the papers of the American Free-Will Baptist Mission, as it was then called, is alive with all the excitement of a new discovery. In the journal of "Brother Noyes", under the date December 29, 1838, he records: "Came to a small village in the heart of a dense jungle. As soon as I came in sight of the houses, I felt persuaded I was coming among old acquaintances, they so much resembled the stick huts of the Coles of Cumbhulpore.

[1] S. K. Chatterji, *Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs*, "The Linguistic Problem", 1943.

[2] E. G. Man, *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*, London, Calcutta, 1867.

[3] H. C. Sutherland, *Report on the Management of the Rajmahal Hills*, dated June 8, 1819, Deputy Commissioner's Record Room, Dumka.

[4] F. Buchanan, *An Account of the District of Bhagalpur in* [illegible], 1939.

[5] W. W. Hunter, *Annals of Rural Bengal*, London, 1868.

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When I saw the jet-black people, with a necklace of white beads about their necks, and their peculiar dress, if dress it might be called, I was more confirmed in my opinion. I immediately alighted from my horse and inquired if that was a village of the Coles, but was not a little surprised at being so soon transported from the Oriyas to a people who could not understand a word I said. I looked about with astonishment at the romantic change, till at length I found an old man who could speak broken Oriya, of whom I gained the following information. He said they were not Coles, but Santals."[1] The author of the *Annals* relied largely on information supplied to him by the Rev. Jeremiah Phillips, who was a pioneer in the study of the language. The following occurs in the Annual Report of the mission for the year 1846: "During the past year Brother Phillips has acquired some knowledge of the language of this people (the Santals), by which he has been able to commence efforts for their improvement, which it is believed will result in great good to this hitherto neglected portion of the inhabitants of Orissa. He has performed a journey of some two or three weeks among them, which was very serviceable and interesting to him. He has published a tract of 8 pages, which is the first work ever published in the Santal dialect."

The Santals have been living in South-West Bengal for at least three hundred years. It is probable that they have been there for about five hundred years. There is agreement among the authorities that they moved to their present sites from the more hilly districts of Chota Nagpur farther west. It has been computed that the village of Rangibari in Bankura district is over three hundred years old.[2] Such a long period of residence on the one site is exceptional; the great majority of the Santal villages of today cannot look back on so long a history. Wherever a tradition regarding the founders of a village has survived, one finds that the first settlers moved to their present abode from no great distance away. Regarding Barikul, we are told: "The one who tied the brown hen here was Haru Mañjhi, whose family came first from Aurasuri in Bogri—a distance of about thirty-five miles. They say that formerly there were many wild elephants in Bogri, and for fear of the elephants many of the inhabitants fled to other parts. Sorup and Haru

[1] This and the following quotation I owe to the kindness of the Rev. A. A. Berg, who enabled me to see early reports in his possession.

[2] M. C. McAlpin, *A Report on the Condition of the Santals in the Districts of Birghum, Bankura, Midnapore and North Balasore*, IV (10), Bengal Government, 1909.

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Sorup and Haru Mąñjhi were two brothers. Sorup Mąñjhi left Bogri because of the elephants, came to Raipur and settled. He had established himself well at the end of a year or two, so he told his younger brother: 'Leave Bogri, where the elephants are on the increase. Some day you will be trampled on and killed. Come with me.' Haru Mąñjhi thought to himself: 'True enough, many men have been killed; perchance they will kill me.' Thinking thus, he took all his children, left Bogri and came to Raipur. From Rautora in Raipur they established a village in Barikul, Sorup Mąñjhi saying to his brother: 'Go to, brother, put up your huts and stay at Barikul.' Then Haru Mąñjhi went out with his children, his cattle and his goats, and built his huts there. He had four boys and two girls; the girls they brought with them from Bogri, and the four boys were born in Barikul. He obtained sons-in-law for his daughters to live with them, and one or two tenants came together. In this way the village increased to many houses." Wild elephants, of which there are not so many now as formerly, do still on occasion cause great damage to ripening crops. Barikul was founded five generations ago, a period of about one hundred years. At that time there was also a possibility that by moving his abode the Santal could regain a measure of independence. The Santals have been spoken of as formerly "nomadic".[1] It may be that in the strict sense of the word they were in some remote period nomads. For any period of which we have record, however, they have been agriculturalists, though food-gathering and hunting provide them with important subsidiary occupations. Their migrations have been due to pressure of one kind and another. They prefer to move to forest lands where they will have a hard struggle to establish new settlements than to remain where they have to defend their holdings and their livelihood against hostile forces, whether these be wild animals, malignant actions directed against individuals or the community from the unseen world, or the oppression of landlords and moneylenders.

The last cause operated to produce a great northward movement in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and finally goaded them into rebellion. The Santal rebellion has been frequently described.[2] It took place in an area remote from the Bankura district, but it has to be mentioned because it created

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Santal Parganas*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley, Calcutta, 1910.

[2] J. H. Hutton, *Modern India and the West*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley, Oxford, 1941. Chapter on the Primitive Tribes, pp. 417–44. Also bibliography.

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sand on the pathways becomes unbearably hot for our feet. Pigs were killed at dawn, cut, and the meat was roasted first thing so that it would be ready when the people returned home. The day turned out to be very warm. Some men went into the village of G—— because of their thirst to get a drink of beer, and they said: 'One pice worth of beer from G—— is as good as six pice of beer from that other place.' " The market is the main shopping centre for the villagers. There are cloth stalls and stalls of imported trinkets and ornaments. Potters, weavers, blacksmiths, purveyors of "medicines" and many others display their wares. The Santals may have grain for sale in a good year; they sell fowls and vegetables and buy their salt and cooking oil regularly, with other commodities at need. The market is a great place for the exchange of gossip, for meeting friends and relatives; it is here that many flirtations begin and matches are set in hand.

Nevertheless, the main business of the Santals' life, round which most of their activities centre, is to wrest from the poor soil the greatest possible amount of food. The struggle leaves little time for philosophizing, but they do sometimes crystallize in a phrase some bitter lesson from experience, as when they say:- "Rain in the morning, like a friendship that is easily made, does not last." They work as hard as their social obligations allow. There is nothing distinctive in their methods of agriculture, and for generations they have been accustomed to settled cultivation and the use of the plough. The division of labour between men and women, the taboo against women handling the plough, they share with the surrounding culture. They observe the same propitious days and seasons for sowing and reaping as their neighbours. A great authority on the Santals has said:[1] "They are on their way to becoming agriculturalists, but are, as yet, far behind. . . . They have not as yet learnt the need for and the benefits of weeding and manuring, or of changing the crops, and much more. For example, they do not take proper care of their cattle. These are mostly herded by children, who use much of the time for their own games and pleasures. When the paddy is harvested, the cattle are permitted to roam about. A direct result of this is that it is impossible for people to have any crops standing after the middle of December or thereabouts; the cattle would

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, Pt. III. "How the Santals live", *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1940, Vol. X, No. 3, p. 434.

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## DANCING, MUSIC AND POETRY

Poetry, like music, has to a great extent developed as the handmaid of dancing, though, again like music, it covers a wider range than the songs sung to the accompaniment of dancing. Much has been done in recent years to collect some of the wealth of poetry among the aboriginals of India.[1] A comparison would probably reveal that the store of the Santals in this respect is second to that of no other tribe in India. A great deal of the poetry is spontaneous in composition and therefore ephemeral. They delight in turning out new songs, and those who possess special gifts of song-making are not slow in exercising them. These new and topical songs give poetic expression to some new experience of the group. The coming of the railway was celebrated, as in the following *don* type of song:

In the bazaar at Calcutta
The B.B. line carriages have fallen on the rails.
Send news to the Santals of Siuri,
Bring them here.
With a *hir hor khir khor kupi kol*
B.B. line train carriage *ho*,
Push it up once more.[2]

The beauty of a town lit up with electric lights did not escape notice in this snatch of a *lagre* song:

In Asansol
The electric lights
Look sweet, sweet.[3]

Love songs cover a wide range of expression, tender and passionate, as the following examples may serve to illustrate:

A *lagre* song[4]

The birds of the forest are crying,
They cry with different songs, love;
The fish cry softly, love,
My soul cries for you.

[1] W. G. Archer's *The Blue Grass* contains translations of Oraon poetry. *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, by Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hivale, and *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, by Verrier Elwin, come from Central India.
[2] See Appendix B, No. 3. [3] See Appendix B, No. 4.
[4] See Appendix B, No. 5.

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## CHAPTER 5

## SOME FOLK-TALES

FOLK-TALES are meant to entertain, and only incidentally do they instruct. The stories current among the Santals do, however, reveal standards of conduct; they hold up certain types of character as admirable, others as ridiculous or contemptible, and so help to form the judgment of their hearers. Over two hundred stories told by Santals are available in English, for this is a field that early attracted the attention of Europeans living among them. The first in the field was the Rev. F. T. Cole, who in 1875 printed two stories in the *Indian Antiquary*. A further collection of tales was published in 1891, collected by the Rev. A. Campbell. The collection of C. H. Bompas, entitled *Folklore of the Santal Parganas*, was published in 1909, and this has remained a standard collection in the West. Bodding's monumental work in three volumes was not published until the years 1925-29. It contains ninety-three stories with Santali text and English translation, and the same plan was followed in his other publications, *A Chapter of Santal Folklore*, which contains ten stories, and *Witchcraft among the Santals*, which contains eight. The editor of this last work, which was published after Bodding's death, states that C. H. Bompas obtained the manuscript of many stories from Bodding.[1]

The field is far from exhausted. All collections that have been published up till now have been gathered either in the Santal Parganas or in the district of Manbhum, except for eleven stories published in a book that deals with the Santals of Mayurbhanj,[2] the extreme south of the Santal country. The tales included here are told in the Bankura district and serve to illustrate the Santal attitude towards many of the facts mentioned in other chapters.

### (1) *The Grey Monkey and a Boy*

At the end of a certain bazaar there were a great many trees where lived a band of grey monkeys. Each day one of the

[1] Oslo Ethnographical Museum, *Skrifter Bind* 3, Hefte 3, p. 437: "Years ago most of these tales have been retold from Mr. Bodding's manuscripts by C. H. Bompas in *Folklore of the Santal Parganas* (London, 1909)." For some of the facts in this paragraph I am indebted to an article entitled "The Folk-Tale in Santal Society", by Mildred Archer, *Man in India*, December 1944, Vol. XXIV.

[2] Charulal Mukherjea, *The Santals*, Indian Research Institute, Calcutta, 1943.

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## CHAPTER 6

# MYTHS AND THE CLAN ORGANIZATION

MANY of the social activities of the Santals are based on myths, and the strength of their clan organization is due in no small measure to its foundations in mythology. An examination of the intimate relationship between the two bears out the truth of such a statement as: "The sacred lore of the tribe is not a fanciful tale told in explanation of natural phenomena and inexplicable events, but a method of expressing certain ways of thinking and feeling about the facts of life and of regulating human actions."[1] When for any reason a piece of ritual associated with a myth falls into disuse, knowledge of that myth begins to die out; conversely, when the myth is looked upon as outmoded, the activity with which it is linked begins to lose its hold on the people's imagination. The Santal story of the origin of man and the division of the human race into clans does not appear to be known today in more than outline form, except by a very few, mostly of the older generation. It is recited in the village only on certain occasions—the *caco chatiar* ceremony, at which a child is formally admitted into the privileges of full membership in the tribe; the *Jom Sim* festival, an occasional clan celebration; and the *Karam* festival, which is an affair of the village. None of these institutions has a vigorous life in the area; the *caco chatiar* ceremony of today retains only a vestige of its ancient glory, the *Jom Sim* is very rarely performed, and the same is true of the *Karam* in its full form.[2] The village headman has to recite the myth, but not every headman now is capable of doing so. The decay of the ritual is leading to the disappearance of the ancient myth. It is nevertheless still true that these stories do reveal the Santal view of the world. When they are told they call forth assent, and frequently in ordinary conversation the myths are cited in order to point a moral or clinch an argument. Though there are few who are ready to recite the whole story, some part of it is still familiar to everyone.

The Santal story of the origin of man has been recorded in slightly varying form by different authorities.[3] It did not escape

[1] E. O. James, *Comparative Religion*, Methuen, 1938, p. 335.
[2] Further reference is made to these festivals in the chapter on "Festivals".
[3] The fullest account in English is in *Traditions and Institutions of the Santals*, translated with notes and additions by P. O. Bodding from the Santali text published in 1887 by L. O. Skrefsrud, edited (after the translator's death) by Sten Konow. Oslo, 1942.

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the attention of Sir James Frazer, who quoted the account written by the Rev. A. Campbell in *The Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* (1916). Frazer found in the story confirmation of his thesis: "This Santal story of the origin of man combines the principles of creation and evolution, for according to it mankind is ultimately derived from two images, which were modelled in human form out of froth or damp clay, but were afterwards accidentally transformed into birds, from whose eggs the first man and woman of flesh and blood were hatched."[1]

The following account, written down in the Sarenga area by an old man who could not have had access to any of the previously published versions, brings out most of the essential features of the story.[2] He wrote:

"The sea was always there. *Ṭhąkur* said in the beginning: 'How shall we improve it?' Then *Ṭhąkur* called to himself many of the kings of the sea and asked them how it was possible for earth to be raised from the sea bottom, but not one of them was able to do it. So *Ṭhąkur* first of all called Crab and said to him: 'You there, can you raise the earth from the bottom of this sea?' Crab replied: 'Yes, I can.' Then he set about carrying it up from the bottom of the sea, but it dissolved and he could do nothing. After him, *Ṭhąkur* called Tortoise. When he came *Ṭhąkur* said to him: 'You there, can you raise the earth from the bottom of this sea?' Then Tortoise replied, 'I shall raise it', but he also did not succeed. Last of all *Ṭhąkur* called Worm. When he came *Ṭhąkur* said to him: 'You there, can you raise the earth from the bottom of this sea?' Then Worm said: 'Yes, I can raise it; but you call Tortoise here and place a golden plate on his back. I will eat the mud on the bottom of the sea, and then excrete it at the other end on to the golden plate on Tortoise's back. In this way I shall raise the earth from the bottom of the sea.' And so indeed it was done. But the earth that had been raised was very uneven, and *Ṭhąkur* harrowed it to make it level. During the harrowing the sea came up where there were hollows, and where there were high places these became mountains and hills.

Then *Ṭhąkur* said: 'The world is made after a fashion, but how shall we improve it?' Then *Ṭhąkur* made two birds out of *sirom* grass seeds. They were called *Hāṣ* and *Hąsil*, goose and

[1] J. G. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, Macmillan, 1918, Vol. I, p. 22.
[2] Durlob Murmu of Govindapur.

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## THE WORLD INVISIBLE

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When it has been established that a witch is at work and that she lives in a certain house or village, the villagers of the sick person proceed to the *jan*, or witchfinder, who must give precise information about the individual who is a witch. None of the *jans* in the area are Santals, but the latter consult them quite freely. These men are notorious for having their scouts in the countryside, and they manage to secure all the information that they require before the party of villagers comes to them. They uphold their reputation not only by finding witches, but through being credited with second sight in other matters. They are consulted about lost and stolen property and about straying cattle.

All the witches of the Santals are women. This suggests that [462] women find some compensation in a "private" cult for the fact that they are cut off from active participation in the tribal worship of the spirits. The general term for a witch is *ḍan*, and [192] ordinarily the *ḍan* is reputed to be a member of a secret society with its own ritual and magic. Undoubtedly there are women who believe themselves to be *ḍan*. The *ḍan ḍhaḳin* is one who possesses some kind of evil nature and is able to put the "evil eye" on others. The fear of these witches is responsible for the [342] fact that Santal houses are built without windows. When sometimes they leave an opening in the wall, they see that it is very small and so placed that no person standing outside will be able to look at any of the individuals inside, especially at night. The *ḍan jugin* are persons who use magic and know sorcery.[1] They acquire influence over certain *boŋgas*, and they make use of material objects in doing so. One of the tasks of an *ojha* who declares that there are buried *boŋgas* at work in a house is to locate them. He finds them buried in the house or the courtyard in the form of stones with human hair tied to them. The *ḍan* can gain control of a person and cause madness, a point that is well brought out in a story that is related here in the form in which it was told. "There was a youth in our village about sixteen years old, named Monmotha. One day last year he was going through the jungle from Calta to Beltwalá; he returned at about noon, and on his way he had to pass a *boŋga than*. As he was passing it he was struck with fear, and when he reached home he was out of his senses and began to talk a

[1] The distinction between witchcraft as an influence and sorcery as a magic art using material objects made by E. Evans Pritchard in *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford University Press) seems to find some correspondence here. [113]

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to leave. On one occasion I was informed that a woman had been killed as a suspected witch, but it was impossible to make a satisfactory investigation; and on another occasion I was asked to see the body of a young man where the villagers were convinced that witchcraft had been responsible for his death. It appeared to be a case of poisoning. Fortunately, some of the evidence relating to witchcraft and murder has been documented. Murder by Santals is comparatively rare, but fear of witchcraft is one of the most frequent motives at work. Statistics have been published for the Santal Parganas for the period 1931–40. During this period there were seventy-eight cases of homicide by Santals before the courts, and of the seventy-eight it was definitely established that sixteen were due to accusations of witchcraft.[1] It is reasonable to infer that the actual number was somewhat larger, for in most such cases the sympathy of the community is on the side of the murderers, and so it becomes a fairly easy matter to conceal the crime.

It appears that in other parts of North India the magician, or *ojha*, is a dealer in "black magic",[2] but among the Santals the order of *ojhas* might almost seem to have been called into being because of the need to defend society against the evil influence and the sorcery of witches who are the enemies of society. The *ojha* is a benefactor of society and seeks to overcome witchcraft by invading the territory of the witches and using their weapons. Each of the opposing camps is prepared to lay hands on any weapon that may serve its purpose.

The same truth is evident in all the Santal's dealings with things that he cannot understand. The attitudes summed up in the terms "magic" and "religion" are both in evidence. It is not usual in these days to distinguish sharply between them.[3] Magic is used by the Santal as a tool to accomplish many and varied ends. It is not absent from his dealings with the spirits, and it can be used for social as well as antisocial ends. It does

[1] S. M. Naqavi, "Santal Murders", an article in *Man in India*, September 1943, Vol. XXIII.

[2] W. Crooke, *op. cit.*, p. 443: "In Northern India the worker of black magic is the Ojha, a term derived from the Sanskrit Upādhāya, 'teacher', and the Syāna, 'cunning man', who follow the traditional methods handed down from their predecessors. Their stock-in-trade is a collection of Mantras or spells, many based on the magic of the Tāntras, 'rule, ritual', used in the cult of the Sakti or female energy, by which they are supposed to acquire the power of controlling spirits or demons, and of forcing them to obey the orders of the sorcerer."

[3] Cf. G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, Cambridge University Press, 1945, p. 72: "Magic for us, though it may not postulate any transcendent reality, is an integral part of primitive religion."

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some thirty miles from Sarenga. This fair, which is one of the most famous in Western Bengal, takes place at the time of the Dol Jatra near a temple dedicated to Krishna. The last day of the *mela* is chiefly renowned for the fact that on that day there is a great concourse of Santals for dancing.

One festival which is shared with tribes living right across Central India[1] is the *Karam*. The fact that it is not peculiar to them is known to the Santals, and one informant once told me that they must have borrowed it from the Mahato. He had seen that the Mahato celebrated it and knew of the special relationship between the Mahato and his own people. Many of the songs contain references to Ram and Lokhon, heroes of the *Ramayana*. The festival is rather difficult to characterize, for its celebration takes different forms and arises from different causes. It is connected in all cases with the desire for prosperity, but it may be either a public or a private celebration. The *karam* is a tree[2] that is associated with the god Krishna in the *Vishnu Purana*. When a shoot of this tree is found growing in the land round a house or springing from the roof thatch, the head of that house is responsible for instituting an annual celebration of the festival. The fact that while it is celebrated annually in a great many villages it is not found invariably is perhaps accounted for by its accidental origin. The festival is also associated with certain other definite events. In some cases the leading celebrant is the local *ojha*, who holds a *Karam* festival at the beginning of the month of *Dāsāē* and before he sends out his disciples on their annual begging expedition. Sometimes it is celebrated in connection with the appointment of the new headman of a village, and sometimes in connection with the death ceremonies of a man of substance. Sometimes it is associated with the *Mak' Mōṛē*, an occasional sacrifice to the "Five". These spirits are peculiarly liable to become offended, and offerings are made to them to avert their wrath, which takes the form of inflicting a poor harvest or an epidemic. Whatever the occasion may be, the celebration of the *Karam* is regarded as an insurance either on behalf of a particular family or on behalf of the whole village. It may be either a way of enhancing good fortune or of warding off evil. Where in the area it has become an annual festival it is held at the full moon in the month of *San* (July-August). At sunset the un-

[1] References to Central India are to be found in *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, by V. Elwin, Oxford University Press, pp. 3–11.

[2] *Adinia cordifolia*, Hook., f. and th.

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## CHAPTER 13

# THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

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WHEN "Brother Noyes" in the year 1838 "came to a small village in the heart of a dense jungle"[1] somewhere on the borders of Bengal and Orissa, a new factor was introduced in the history of the Santals. Those pioneer missionaries, American Baptists of the early nineteenth century, seem to have felt early the charm of the Santals. The following extract from the journal of Jeremiah Phillips for February 10, 1841, is typical of the attitude pervading the first reports: "Spent the morning in making up a vocabulary of Santal words. Obtained about 150 words. *P.M.* Hearing that there would be a large dance some three or four miles off, and as most of our villagers had gone, we determined to go also. On our way we overtook a company of men, women and children, dressed in their nicest cloths, singing and skipping about in the most delightful manner. On arriving at the spot, we found some six-hundred people assembled in a circular enclosure, in the centre of which a few leaves of the *sarl* tree were placed upon some rough images of elephants, horses, crocodiles, etc. Around these were some two hundred women, while in the outer part of the circle a large company of musicians, followed by the men, were marching round at a varied pace, the weaker sex in the centre more leisurely. The scene was pleasant to witness; it is so seldom that we see anything like activity, that we delight to gaze even upon a dance. The highest bliss to which an Oriya aspires is to stuff himself till he can eat no more, and then lie down to sleep in the sun. This constitutes his happiness here, and in his opinion will constitute his happiness hereafter. But here appears to be a very different people. Wherever we have been, we have found the women mingling with the men, in their labours and in their recreations; and they do not appear to be considered inferior. The consequence is they look like human beings—they respect themselves."[2] The American Baptists at work in the Midnapore district of Bengal as well as in Orissa were the first to give the Santals some literature, and as soon as possible they developed an extensive system of primary educa-

[1] See Chapter 1, p. 3.

[2] This extract occurs in the Eighth Annual Report of the Freewill Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, read and accepted at the anniversary meeting at Topsham, New England, on October 7, 1841. Other passages also have been published in a paper entitled "Early Records concerning the Santals", *Man in India*, Vol. XXV, 1945, by the present writer. See also footnote 1 on page

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tion without losing sight of their main objective, the presentation of the Christian Gospel. One of their missionaries wrote in 1865: "We have by no means lost sight of the all-important fact that secular education without heart culture is of very little consequence. Hence, we have ever made the spiritual instruction of the people as prominent as possible. . . ."[1]

The main missionary effort developed in the north after the tragic rebellion of Santals had directed public attention to their affairs. The Santal Mission of the Northern Churches published its Seventy-Fifth Annual Report in 1941 and reported a total community of over 25,000 Christians. This mission, with supporting committees in Norway, Denmark and America, grew out of the pioneer work of a remarkable Norwegian, Lars Olsen Skrefsrud, and his Danish companions, Mr. and Mrs. Boerresen. Resigning from the Gossner Lutheran Mission, they began work independently and established a mission station at Benagaria in 1867. Skrefsrud, who was in every sense a giant of a man, prepared an *Introduction to the Grammar of the Santali Language*, which was published in 1873. It is to his enthusiasm and interest that we owe the account of the Santal traditions published in Santali in 1887. His linguistic work was carried forward and developed by the great scholar P. O. Bodding. To their efforts more than to any other cause the Santals owe the fact that Santali has developed a literature. The first efforts of the missionaries were aimed at providing the scriptures, song books and reading primers, for which purpose the Roman script was adapted, but a great stimulus to the study by the Santals of their own institutions was provided by the publication of the traditions.[2] This mission also publishes the only Santali periodical, which is now in its twenty-sixth year. Other societies that have made notable contributions to missionary work in the Santal Parganas and neighbouring areas are the Church Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland, the latter being particularly noted for the excellent service of medical missionaries at Bamdah. The Santal members of the different Church bodies are brought together in the meetings of the Santal Christian Council, a body that was established in 1934 and is the only organization of any kind that brings together Santals

[1] Stacy, *Life of Otis Robinson Bachelor*, p. 318, quoted from *Primary Education among Santals of Midnapore*, 1931, A Survey with Proposals, by Lewis Clayton Kitchen, Calcutta.

[2] *Mare Hapramko reak' Katha*, Dumka (1st ed., 1887). An English translation by P. O. Bodding was published in Oslo in 1942, entitled *Traditions and Institutions of the Santals*.

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was sent to the Sub-Divisional Officer with a petition. The result was negative. After still more deliberation we went to Dumka and with our Secretary's help placed the petition before the Deputy Commissioner. This was immediately granted. A few days after this nearly two thousand more of the population in this area, 80 per cent. of which is stated to be Santals, got their little share of the promised loan."[1]

At Sarenga as elsewhere the necessary preoccupation with the problem of daily bread led to other developments in policy. In addition to becoming a landlord the mission also became a cultivator and employer of labour, thus being in a position to introduce improvements in farming methods to the people in a practical manner and not merely by preaching. Furthermore, something had to be done about the problem of debt that was crippling the Santals. Loans were granted to individuals, and in this matter, too, a later generation of missionaries, which is wise after the event, is inclined to question the wisdom of what was done. An attempt was made in the early years to give loans to cultivators at reasonable rates of interest through the organization of a grain bank, but most of the beneficiaries, unaccustomed to any but the most overbearing and unscrupulous behaviour from their moneylenders in the past, did not see the urgency of loan repayment, and in later years there has been an attempt to establish co-operatives on a sounder basis. Some of the loans given in the early years in order to save land for a family were on a scale that a subsequent generation that has had to try to realize them can only regard as inordinately lavish. The need for this kind of help has been greatly diminished since protective legislation came into force.

If missionaries were compelled to work for economic justice often against their will, they found other spheres open to them which they were eager to enter. Everywhere they have been the pioneers of education for the Santals; until recently they were almost the only agencies in the field. In the district of Midnapore the American Baptist Mission has, by a delegation of authority by the government, been almost solely responsible for the administration of funds and the supervision of schools. These range from the village primary school with a single teacher to a Santal High School for boys where they may sit for the matriculation examination of Calcutta University. In the Bankura district a missionary has always been a member of the Santal Education

[1] *The Seventy-fifth Annual Report of the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches*, 1941, pp. 40–47.

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